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LAND TENURES

OF THE

DEKKAN.

BY

LIEUT.-COLONEL W. H. SYKES,

F.R.S., F.L.S, F.G.S., &c. &c.

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LAND TENURES OF THE DEKKAN,

BY

LIEUT.-COLONEL W. H. SYKES, F.R.S. F.L.F.G.S.

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LATE STATISTICAL REPORTER TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY.

CHAP. I.

As an account of the tenures in the Dekkan involves the consideration of certain ancient Hindú offices, I beg to offer some preliminary observations which may possibly assist in throwing light on the former state of the country now called Mahárashtra, and its institutions. The Mahrattas do not pretend to be the aborigines; they have a tradition that they came from the north, and that they are of Rájpút origin. The question follows, who then were their predecessors?

The stupendous monuments of human perseverance, taste, and religious zeal; the wonderfully excavated cave-temples, refectories, chambers, reservoirs, and common halls, surrounded by cells, indicating that their object was the accommodation of monastic fraternities at Ellora, Junar, Nanaghát, Karlé, Sashtí, or Salsette, and other places, assist in solving this question. They bear silent, but convincing, testimony that the country was anciently possessed by a people who had nothing in common with the present inhabitants in objects of religious worship, in religious architecture, in personal appearance (judging from the alto-relievos of figures), or in the graphic characters used to express ideas. That this ancient people were Buddhists is proved from similar objects of worship, similar temples, chambers, and inscriptions existing at the present day amongst Buddhists, or as relics of Buddhism in Ceylon, in Birma, and in the island of Bali, adjoining to Java; and particularly in the Buddh alphabet of Bali (agreeably to specimens furnished by Sir Stamford Raffles in his *Java*), resolving itself into that of the Buddhists of the Dekkan, as met with in inscriptions common to both countries; and by its aid, at a future period

should the language prove to be the same, the history of the excavations in the Dekkan and at Salsette may become known.

How the ancient inhabitants disappeared from Maháráshtra, so entirely as not to leave a tradition even respecting themselves (the Mahrattas referring all the Buddha cave-temples to their own heroes, the Pánduva princes), is an object of curious, but apparently hopeless, inquiry. By the help, however, of numerous existing Hindú commemorative stones,* a clue is afforded to this mystery. These stones are every where met with from the open plains bordering on the Carnatic, to the solitude and fastnesses of the hill-fort of Harichandrúg, in the western Ghâts. They are usually found within the limits of the temples dedicated to Mahádéva, and rarely in isolated situations. In one instance, the outline of one, with its figures, is *traced* on the walls of a Buddha cave at Junar, but the figures are not worked out into relief, and the work is evidently subsequent and extraneous to the completion of the temple. The present people do not distinctly appreciate their object, the few tales attached to them being contradictory and puerile; but they tell their own history, I think, succinctly and perspicuously. They are in form like the flat, perpendicular gravestones frequent in churchyards in England, and sometimes as a square pillar. One side is divided into four compartments placed above each other, and the whole contain figures in bas-relief. The upper compartment has the Linga, the symbol of Mahádéva, sculptured on it, with figures worshipping. In the compartment next below, there is a male personage, armed with a short broad dagger, attended by females; the whole of them are in dancing or joyous attitudes. In the third compartment, the male personage of the second compartment is engaged in battle against numerous foes; and on some stones this personage is recognised as being one of the worshippers of the Linga in the upper compartment. In the lowest compartment there is a man apparently dead, and the presence of antelopes indicates that he has been driven to the wilds far from the haunts of men. May we not give the following reading of these interesting sculptures:—The country was inhabited by Buddhists; it was invaded by worshippers of the Linga; the worship of Buddha put down, and his followers extirpated or driven out, and the Linga and its followers succeeded? Of the expulsion of the Buddhists there is auxiliary proof in the traditions of the Buddhists of Birma and Java, which refer their origin to Ceylon and India. The invader may have been RÁMA CHANDRA, evidently no allegorical personage, nor of the remotest antiquity, who marched against RÁVANA, the Buddha king of Ceylon;

* See the accompanying Illustration.

and the new settlers of the tracts deserted by the Buddhists may have been an auxiliary nation in the army of RÁMA, or part of the subjects of his native kingdom. If this people were the ancestors of the present Mahrattas at the period of their settlement, their numbers were probably limited, for it is asserted that there are but ninety-six family names, or surnames, in the Mahratta nation; and so satisfied are persons of the same name, of their descent from a common ancestor, that these families cannot intermarry, however distant the ties of blood may now be by the spreading ramifications of ages of collateral descent. If there were any contests for the establishment of the Linga in the Dekkan, the prevalence of its worship at the present moment manifests their successful issue. With the Mahrattas this symbol has always been peculiarly an object of reverence, and, for the most part, Mahádéva, or his attributes, are their Kulaswámis, or household gods; and the oldest temples, as well those cut out of the rocks at Ellora and Elephanta, as those buried in the lofty and gloomy woods of the Ghâts, are dedicated to it.

If the Mahrattas were the immediate successors of the Buddhists, whose extirpation or expulsion was complete, they would, in taking possession of the country, have been unfettered in every respect, and their institutions would have been fixed simultaneously with a common object. We may suppose the deserted villages at once peopled by the new race, and the lands shared by the prince, his chiefs, and the Mahratta soldiery. Individual shares or allotments might, naturally enough, have been distinguished by the name of their first possessors. The mode of succession to property amongst Hindús would make these allotments hereditary, without at all affecting any reserved paramount rights of the prince. Artisans, *religieux*, and others, followers of the troops, would not have had any substantive claims upon the conquered possessions, but their presence being necessary for the internal economy, the well-being, and comfort of a village, provision would be made for them by fees in kind from the possessors of these Thals or estates, at a period when it may be doubted whether a money circulating medium obtained to any extent. The Mahratta who had enjoyed the greatest consideration amongst his compatriots when serving with the army, would remain the chief or Patél, or the office might have been conferred by the prince. In village accounts the lettered Bráhman would be made use of. For the general administration of the country, villages would be thrown together into districts, officers appointed over them, and over these last there would probably be a connecting link with the prince. All offices of trust, emolument, or power, would necessarily be in the

hands of Mahrattas; and those of accounts in the hands of Bráhmans, from their knowledge of letters. How far the present state of Hindú institutions in the Dekkan, which have any pretensions to antiquity, sanctions these assumptions, the following investigation of various tenures will perhaps assist to develope.

CHAP. II.

THE institutions and functionaries for the civil government of the country at the period of the Musalmán invasion are said to have been as follows, and they remain nearly the same at the present day:—

All lands were classed within some village boundary or other; villages had a constitution for their internal government, consisting of the Patél, or chief, assisted by a Chaugula, the Kulkarní, or village accountant, and the well-known village officers the Baráballotí; the numbers of the latter were complete or not according to the population of the village, and the consequent means of supporting them. A few villages constituted a Náikwari, over which was an officer with the designation of Náik. Eighty-four villages constituted a Désmukh, equivalent to a Pargana, or county. Over this number was placed a Désmukh, as governor, assisted by a Déschaugula; and, for the branch of accounts, there was a Déspánd, or district accountant and registrar. The links connecting the Désmukhs with the prince, were the Sar-Désmukhs, or heads of the Désmukhs; they were few in number. It is said there were also Sar-Déspands. The Sar-Désmukhs, Désmukhs, Náiks, Patéls, and Chaugulas, in short, all persons in authority, were Mahrattas; the writers and accountants were mostly Bráhmans.

The division of the country into Súbahs, Tálluks, Parganahs, and Tarafs, is comparatively recent; the whole of the names for such divisions being of Musalmán origin.

My earliest inquiries led me to believe that the lands of villages were divided into hereditary family estates, called Thals, bearing the names of ancient Mahratta families, the descendants of which were then in possession of them; or bearing the names of extinct families, of whose ancient possession tradition bore testimony. The results of six years' research were confirmatory of these points. The lands of extinct families were, and still are, called Gat-Kul, from the Sanskrit *gata*, gone, passed away, and *kula*, a race, family. Under all changes of government and new proprietary, the family names by which they were originally distinguished have rarely been disturbed, and it is

probable that they are handed down from very remote times. The law of succession by primogeniture not obtaining amongst the Hindús, it is probable that, in the second generation from the original proprietor, the estates would be divided, and come into the possession of two or more males of the same family; and that, as the branches multiplied, the individual shares diminished in size, until each was no longer equal to the support of one person. So circumstanced, the smaller proprietors must have sought means of subsistence elsewhere. But it is very remarkable, that the greater part of the lands examined by me (and, I believe, in the Dekkan generally), are Gat-kul; and the usual law of nature appears to have been so far inoperative, that very many of the families of the original proprietors have disappeared. Even in those families still in possession, in rare instances only have I met with such an increase, as to impose on the cadets the necessity of abandoning their kindred and lands. I have frequently found the representative of an ancient house, and the consequent proprietor of a whole Thal, a childless, helpless, and poverty-stricken old man, or an infant, or a young man employed as a labourer, under the farmer of his own property. At Nímbí, Parganah-Kardé, in the Nagar collectorate there were twenty-three Thals, of which eighteen were Gat-kul; at Kothul, nine Thals and five Gat-kul. In the first case eighteen families are extinct out of twenty-three, and, in the second, five out of nine.

At Wangi, a town on the Bíma river, lately transferred by the Nizám to the British, although for ages under a Musalmán government, and although the town-lands are not distinguished in the Kulkarní's public papers by Thals, yet the number of the Thals, their names and limits, were well known; while seven-tenths of the families to which they formerly belonged were extinct. At Karkamb, a flourishing town near Pandatpúr, belonging to the Patwardan family, Thals exist; but only two representatives of two ancient families remain of all those formerly in possession. At Wangi, in the Parganah of Mandrúp, bordering on the Carnatic, only three Mírásdárs remain. At the village of Belwandi, Parganah Kardeh, Ahmednagar Collectorate, belonging to his Highness SINDIAH, there was not a single representative of an ancient family remaining in A.D. 1827, the whole of the lands being Gat-kul. There were, nevertheless, some half-a-dozen Mírásdárs, who had purchased their lands from the Patél six or seven-and-twenty years back. The Kulkarní even denied the existence of Thals, or estates; but one of the Mírásdárs having told me that he had his land on the Thal of an extinct family, I urged their existence so strenuously, that a Thaljárá, or list of the estates

into which the village lands are divided, was at last reluctantly produced,—an old worn paper, dated Sakhi 1698, A.D. 1777. In this list, I found the Thals minutely detailed, together with their possessors, the number and names of the Mírásdárs who had purchased Mírás rights from the village authorities, on the Thals that had become Gat-kul; and, finally, the names of the different Úparís renting land on the Thals. In 1827, there was not a single person alive, a descendant from the possessors of the Thals or Mírás rights in 1777; and, but for this paper, it might well have been doubted whether Thals had ever existed in Belwandi. It would appear, that in HOLKAR'S inroad into the Dekkan in 1802, war, famine, pestilence, or flight, had depopulated the village; that the few people that returned, died subsequently, and that, in consequence, there was not an ancient heritor remaining. The joint Patéls claimed to be so, but as their family names did not correspond with any of the names of Thals in the above-mentioned list, they were evidently *parvenus*. Were other proofs wanting, the existence of a Thaljárá, under such peculiar circumstances, is fully sufficient to establish the division of lands into family estates. It is gratifying, however, to find, that even at the seat of the Musalmán government of the Nizám Sháhí kings, the ancient Mahratta land institutions have continued unchanged. The lands of Bagh Roza, one of the constituent villages of Ahmednagar, are divided into Thals, each having a family name, with descendants of the original proprietors in possession of many of them. It might have been supposed that the Musalmáns would have dispossessed the Hindús; but with the single exception of one Thal, which from time immemorial has been in the possession of the descendants of HUSAIN KHÁN, whose name it bears, there is not a Musalmán name to any of the Thals. At the village of Taklí, Taraf Khatgáon, ten miles west of Ahmednagar, Thals had certainly disappeared. There was not a Thaljárá; the inhabitants knew nothing of such a division of the lands; and the few persons of a similar surname, who claimed to be Mírásdárs in the village, instead of being possessors of contiguous lands, which would have been the case had they been lineal or collateral heritors of a Thal, had their lands widely dispersed. From Thals being unknown at Taklí, it is probable that the village at one time was entirely depopulated, and the village papers lost. There is certainly no proof of their former existence; but as I have shewn that their existence was denied at Belwandí, until an old Thaljárá was produced, and as they are found to exist in a vast majority of the villages examined by me, the presumption is that they also once existed at Taklí. Such an impression appears to have ob-

tained with our revenue authorities, for the whole of the lands of the village have been newly divided into Thals; but the lands of persons of similar surnames, however widely separated, have been classed under one Thal. Individuals have had Thals named after them, and the village papers now present the almost unprecedented feature of a total want of Gat-kul lands; and the village authorities seem to think that the whole of the present cultivators are established on hereditary rights. At the flourishing Jágír town of Wamorí, in the Gangatharí, Thals do not exist, but an equivalent exists in the lands being classed by families on a list called Jamín Jahra Jatéhwar. This list consists of thirty-four Jathas, or families. They consist of a greater or less number of individuals, and holding a greater or less portion of land, but seldom in contiguous parcels, all of which are divided into fields called Tíkas, each field having a name. The Patárá family (one of the five Patéls) have 41,016 Bíghas (or 30,762 acres), divided into a multitude of fields or Tíkas; but there is not any Thal or Tíka called Patárá. The Phagréh family, consisting of four houses, have twelve Tíkas, or fields, on different parts of the village lands, but there is not a Phagreh Thal, or Phagreh Tíka. The same observation applies to the rest. This want of accordance between the names of the estates and the names of their present owners, is plainly indicative of comparatively recent proprietary. This is admitted by the inhabitants, who say that Wamorí in former times was frequently destroyed by the Bhíls. The inhabitants fled; the lands lay waste; part of the Patél and Kulkarnís' families returned after each devastation, and appropriated to themselves such lands as they chose (witness the Patárá family with more than 30,000 acres). The rest of the lands were allowed to be occupied by strangers; and it is admitted, that the settlement of all the inhabitants, with the exception of the Patél families, is within fifty years: and the Patéls only returned to their lands after long absences. It may well be supposed, therefore, that it was for the interest of the Patéls to disregard Thals. The new settlers could know little about them; and they have disappeared. Thals had also disappeared at the town of Barágáon Nandúr, on the Múl river, until the British restored them. After Holkar's incursion in 1802, the town was wholly abandoned for a year; it has since been thrice devastated by the Bhíls, and, in the confusion consequent on these events, the limits of family possessions were lost.

The former existence of Thals, however, is asserted by the people. The land-list is now kept in Tíkas, or fields, which do not bear the names of their present owners. At Sindiah's large town of Jamgáon,

eighteen miles west of Ahmednagar, the Thal-system exists, although most of the Thals are Gat-kul. The same is the case at Rámjangáon, Taraf-Rámjangáon, also belonging to Sindiah, where only five hereditary families remain. At Alkúlí, Pargana Kardé, an alienated town, the whole of the lands are divided into family estates; but were I to name all the places where the Thal-system still obtains, it would be necessary to supply a list of three-fourths of the towns and villages in the collectorates of Púnah and Ahmednagar. Where Thals have disappeared, as at Wamorí, Taklí, Belwandí, Baragáon, Nandúr, &c. there is presumptive evidence of their former existence. From personal observation and inquiry, therefore, and from the concurring testimony of cultivators in different parts of the country, I fully believe, that the whole of the lands of the Dés, or campaign country, within the extensive boundaries to which my researches refer, were at one time divided into hereditary family properties. The proof of their hereditary character is involved in the fact of persons being still in possession of lands bearing their own names, which lands the village documents testify to their ancestors having been in possession of nearly a century and a half ago. It must be admitted, that in the hilly tracts along the Ghâts, called the Máwals, the Thal-system is more rare than in the Dés, or campaign country, although still met with in villages where the lands are tolerably flat, and admit of extensive contiguous cultivation. Its greater rarity is to be accounted for in the character of the country, which, for the most part, allows of cultivation being carried on only in small separate patches; in the great extent of the village lands proportioned to the population, which admits of a yearly choice of new spots, and the consequent want of local value to ground; in the mixed constituents of the population, the greater parts of which consists of Kohlís, whose habits and opinions are not wholly in accordance with those of the Mahrattas; and, finally, the systematic divisions in the campaign country (of the ancient and perfect existence of which there are so many proofs), may not have penetrated the fastnesses of the hills. Thals, however, existed amongst the Kohlís; for at the town of Ghoreh, where the Thals are in possession of Mahrattas, they bear Kohlí names.

CHAP. III.

THE existence of hereditary estates being established, the tenures on which they were held will be best illustrated by an account of the relation in which the proprietors of portions of them stood, and still stand, to the government. Persons so holding lands are called Mírásdárs, a term of Arabic origin, from *Mírás*, heritage, patrimony. They are of two kinds, those who are descendants of the original proprietors of Thals, and those who have purchased lands from the descendants of the original proprietors, or from the village authorities, who had at their disposal the lands of extinct families. In no instance that I am aware of, have the former documentary proofs of their rights. With the latter, documentary proof is not uncommon, in the shape of a paper called a Mírás Patta, or letter of inheritance, which is witnessed not only by the authorities of the village where the letter is granted, but by those of neighbouring villages, and by the Désmukh and Déspánd of the district, and the privity of government is consequently implied.

The term Mírásdár has superseded the ancient Hindú terms Thulkarí, Thulwahí. These terms are known at present to the Mahrattas, but they are rarely used. In an award, however, on a dispute regarding shares in the office of the Patél of Kawítah-Parganah-Pábal, dated 104 years ago, of which I possess a copy, the term Mírásdár is not met with, although Mírás is — Thalwahí being the only distinctive appellation for the cultivator. Whatever may have been the meaning of the Hindú terms, the Musalmáns who, no doubt, introduced the appellation Mírásdár, in doing so, ostensibly acknowledged an hereditary right to land in that portion of the people whom they had conquered, denominated Thalwahí and Thalkarí; and, by applying the term Hakkdár, of Arabic origin, to the Désmukh, or Désáí, and Déspandah, the district officers whom they found in the country on their arrival, they acknowledged hereditary officers also. In these concessions the Musalmáns did not intend to make any practical sacrifice of their rights as conquerors, but the terms themselves are sufficiently illustrative of their appreciation of the tenures they found in the country on their arrival.

Mírásdárs of the present day claim a right to the personal occupancy of their land so long as they pay the government assessments on it; and in case of failure in the payment of the government dues, and the consequent forfeiture of the right of occupancy, they claim the

right to resume it whenever they can pay their arrears, and also to mortgage or sell it at pleasure.

The land-tax is asserted to have been fixed, and there is no reason to doubt it, as all Mírás land still continues to pay the *Sosthí-dar*, or what is deemed the permanent tax; but government, at pleasure, could put extra cesses on it, and thus neutralise the advantages of a permanent tax, and render the Mírás tenures valueless. I have to remark, also, that in an examination of the papers of many villages between the Bíma and Sína rivers, transferred by the Nizám to the British, in no instance did I meet with the terms Watan Mírás, or Gat-kul, in the official classification of the village lands, although these villages were immediately under the administration of a noble Mahratta family, and Thals, Watandárs, and Mírásdárs, existed in them. It is probable, therefore, that the Musalmáns took little count of Mírás rights, but they had not any motive to interfere with them so long as the Mírásdárs paid their taxes between man and man; therefore Mírás rights were operative; but it is idle to suppose, in the relation in which the Mírásdárs stood to a despotic government, that their rights existed otherwise than by sufferance, where the abuse of power was not subject to the salutary check of public opinion, and where there was as little hesitation in taking their lives as their property. The observation applies equally to Hindú as to Musalmán rule; but I am bound to express my belief that usurpation of the landed property of its subjects was rare under either government.

Although Mírás, or hereditary land, was assessed permanently, yet it was at a higher rate than any other land, at least if we judge from the difficulty discoverable in village papers for the last half century of letting waste land at the Mírás rate. This permanent assessment on the Mírás land was called, as I before stated, the Sosthí-dar; there was an extra tax also payable every three years, called Míráspattí, or a specific tax upon the hereditary land, being a kind of smart-money for the distinction which the term Mírásdár conferred. This tax is now in desuetude in many villages where Mírás land exists; for instance, at Kheir, Taraf, Rasín, &c. &c.

The Mírásdárs, also, were not exempt from any of those duties which government chose to impose on the population of certain villages conveniently situated to cut and carry grass to the government stables (which labour is now commuted into a money-tax under the name of Gawut-bígar), and they were also subject to the Désmukhs, Déspandahs, Patéls, Kulkarnís, and Ballotí's fees of grain. Notwithstanding all the above drawbacks, it is an undoubted fact that Mírás land was highly estimated, and tenaciously retained, even at a

pecuniary loss. I am not aware that the Mírásdár had any advantages commensurate with the high rent, extra assessments, and other calls on his land and labour; he had certainly a voice in the village councils, which the Úparí, or mere renter, had not; but he could not rise to any authority in the Pándrí, or village corporation, unless he belonged to the Patél's family. In the western hilly tracts, Mr. W. Chaplin, commissioner in the Dekkan, states that he was exempt from marriage fees, widows' marriage fees, buffalo-tax, and sometimes house-tax; the last I observed to be the case in the district of Markoreh Poonah collectorate, but all other taxes in this district the Mírásdár paid in common with the Úparí. He had certain claims to precedence in festivities and ceremonies; he could sell his lands; and, in former times, when there was a greater parity than now exists between the supply and consumption of agricultural produce, the lands had an intrinsic value, and were desirable possessions. It may be possible, but not probable, that his lands had an augmented value from the permanent land-tax, being less in former times than yearly tenants were compelled to pay for waste land. I have seen many Mírás Patras (letters of inheritance) granted by Mírásdárs, or by the Patéls and Kulkarnís, or by villages in different parts of the country, dated between twenty-five and fifty years back; but, for the last twenty-five years, land has not had a saleable value in the tracts traversed by me, unless probably in some rare instances, for the sites of houses in large towns. Consumption falls short of production; the value of agricultural produce is depreciated; the money assessments continue the same, or nearly so; and the grain, forage, and other cesses, have been converted into money rates; the Mírásdár of the present day, therefore, is unquestionably in a worse situation than the Úparí, or mere renter. Mírás land has lost its value, although the abstract right to it may have been confirmed under us, and it will be found that the Mírásdárs will silently get rid of their highly-assessed lands, and rent Uktí lands, unless the assessments be equalised in both tenures. Of so little value are Mírás lands now, that in every village, it is not to be denied, very many Mírásdárs have abandoned them, and are absentees, and such absentees are called Parágandah.

Before quitting the Mírásdár, it is requisite to notice that the term is usually considered by us as synonymous with Watandár; but, at the town of Veir, on the Bhíma river, below Pangáon, I found the Watandárs distinguished from the Mírásdárs in the village papers. The Watandárs were twenty-seven in number, the Mírásdárs fifteen. In explanation of this distinction, the people said the Watandárs were

the holders, or relations of the holders (with right of succession) of hereditary village offices; the Mírásdárs being hereditary land-owners. The Watandár was always a Mírásdár; but the Mírásdár, simply as such, was not necessarily a Watandár.

CHAP. IV.

From the extinction of numerous Mahratta families who were in possession of Thals, or hereditary estates, great part of the land in the country is without proprietors; in consequence, a very numerous class of occupiers is the Úparí. The proper meaning of this term is a stranger, or one who cultivates land in a village in which he has not any corporate rights. In practice, he holds land on the Uktí tenure, which is a land-lease by a verbal agreement for one year. In this tenure the rates are not fixed; the parties make the best terms they can; but the Sosthí, or permanent rates, are insisted on as far as is practicable. Persons in authority, no doubt, take advantage of the Uktí tenure.

Formerly the Patéls and village corporation had the disposal of the Gatkul, or abandoned lands, of which I have ample proof in the proceedings of an assembly of Désmukhs, Déspandahs, and Patéls, held under the authority of one of the ministers of the Ráják of Sattarah (the Prathí Níthí) to decide on the right of different claimants to the office of Patél of the village of Kawítah-Parganah-Pábal. Cultivators holding lands on the Uktí tenure can throw them up at pleasure, making good the assessment for the year only; they are not subject to the triennial cess, like the Mírásdár; and at the end of the year they are free to make a new bargain, which, in modern times, is likely to be in their favour from the depreciated value of land and the difficulty of letting it. So lightly does this tenure sit on the people, that the term Sukh-wastí, unfettered, or inhabitant at his ease, is applied to the Úparí. I am not aware that he is subject to any tax to which the Mírásdár is not equally liable, if in some villages a house-tax be excepted. Mírásdárs are not interdicted from holding lands on the Uktí tenure.

CHAP. V.

THE third land-tenure is that of Kaul-Istiwá; Kaul means contract, agreement; and Istiwá is applied to land let under its value. In practice, to induce cultivators to break up land that has long lain waste, a lease is given for five, seven, or, at the most, nine years. The first year a trifling rent is fixed, which increases yearly in arithmetical progression until the fifth, seventh, or ninth year, when the full rent is paid. As it is not imperative on the cultivator to carry on the land after the expiration of the Kaul-istiwá, this tenure is highly desired, and the longer the period the greater the profit to the lessee. As a system, however, it is injurious to the revenue, and unjust to the highly assessed Mírásdár, whose means of realizing his rents are diminished in the ratio of the extent to which Kaul-Istiwás are granted. Were it desirable to extend the cultivation and lessen the price of agricultural products, Kaul-Istiwás would be most effective. In prosecuting my inquiries, I did not meet with any leases for a period exceeding a year at the full rate of assessment; land leases, therefore, of the character of those most common in England, do not appear to be granted.

Any inhabitant of one village cultivating land in a neighbouring village, does so on the Owand tenure. The rate is the Uktí, and with respect to the village such cultivator is in fact an Úparí. His distinctive appellation, however, is Owand Karí.

CHAP. VI.

THE above are the tenures on which the government land revenue is raised, which, in the four collectorates of the Dekkan, amounts to 82·372 per cent of the whole revenue. This per centage includes, however, some trifling rents from government lands, gardens, orchards, grass lands and sheep-feeding, quit-rents, fees, Hakkdárs, and extra cesses.

The following tenures involve alienations of land from a few bíghás in a village to whole districts. These are Jágír and Inám, in Khandesh; Sarenjám, Inám, and Dómála, in the Ahmednagar collectorate; in the Poona collectorate, Inám, Sarenjám, and Izáfat; in Dharwár, Júrí Inám, Sarva Inám, and Jágír. At least, such terms appear in the population returns sent to me, and in the public papers which I have had an opportunity of inspecting.

Jágír, which is a Persian word in its origin, is applied to lands given by government for personal support, or as a fief for the maintenance of troops for the service of the state. Some service is implied in the personal, as well as the military Jágír. In the collectorates in the Dekḳan, upwards of four hundred (populated) villages appear to be alienated in Jágír.

Inám is a word of Arabic origin: it means a gift, or present; and lands so held should be entirely free from tax to government. But a subsequent explanation of various tenures will shew, that Inám has a much wider signification than is generally supposed. This tenure is very extensive in the Dekkan. Independently of the grants of whole towns and villages to individuals, of which there are two hundred and thirty-one alienated in the Poona collectorate alone (and the other collectorates have a proportionate share); independently of the grants for temples and religious institutions, &c. &c., almost every village has rent-free lands held by the Patél, Kulkarní, and Mahrs, and very commonly the Désmukhs and Déspandehs have also land rent-free attached to their offices in the villages of their districts. The Ballotís, also, commonly have Inám-lands, but their Inám is qualified by the imposition of some professional service, and is also quit-rent.

Many of the Ináms are very curious; for instance, at Wangí, Parganah Wangí, Ahmednagar collectorate, there are the following:

"To Antobah Gosawí, for reading stories at the Ucháos, or festivals of the goddess Dévi, 15 bíghás. To the Samel Gondlí, or tabor players at the temple, 15 bíghás. Málí, or gardener, for the supply of flowers for the temple, 30 bíghás. To the Kaḷáwants, and tumbling and dancing women (who are prostitutes), for exercising their profession in honour of the goddess, 30 bíghás. The Gharseh, or clarionet players, who daily play before the idol, 15 bíghás. To the Hollar, or players on the daff, or double drum, 15 bíghás."

These Ináms existed even under the bigoted Musalmán government, and still remain. There are similar Ináms at Karmáleh and many other places.

Amongst the curious Ináms, is that to the Mahan Bháo, a Mahratta who abandons the affairs of life, wears black clothes, and incessantly calls on the name of Krishna. At Jehoor, this personage has an Inám of 104 bíghás.

Lands held in Sarenjám involve the condition of military service. The term is of Persian origin, meaning furniture, apparatus, implying that the lands are to defray the expenses of equipment. In fact, Sarenjám is synonymous with military Jágír. Captain Grant Duff explains "Sarenjámí horseman" to mean, "a horseman furnished by

a Jágírdár for the state." In the Poona collectorate, one hundred and eighty-one villages appear alienated under this tenure.

Dómála, in the etymology of the word, means two rights, from Do, two, and Mál, right, property. The term is only found in the lists of villages in the Ahmednagar collectorate, applied to villages and lands granted to individuals on which government has a reserved right. In this sense, the tenure appears to be that of quit-rent; and the term is synonymous with the Jórí Inám of the Dharwár collectorate.

In the Ahmednagar collectorate, five hundred and eighty-one villages and a half appear in the list as Dómála. The term here is, no doubt, used simply to mean *alienated;* and includes Inám and Jágír villages. Captain GRANT DUFF, in his list of the villages of the Sattarah Government, uses the term Dómála as *alienated,* qualifying it by the terms Khálisagáon, Dómála Amal, or government villages with a small right, *alienated.* Dómálagáon, Sarkarí Amal, *alienated* villages in which government has a small right, and Daróbast Dómála, or wholly alienated.

In the Poona collectorate, the term Izáfat occurs applied to thirty-seven villages and a half, in the Parganahs of Indapúr, Kheir, Hawailí, Náneh, and Ander Mawuls and Indí. This word is probably corrupted from Ziáfat, of Arabic origin, meaning feast or entertainment. Lands so held are rent-free; the tenure, in fact, being that of Sarwa Inám. Trimbuck Rao Narrain, the Muámaladár, or native collector, of Joonar, who had charge of different Ta'alluks, in which were Izáfat villages, considered the term as applicable only to those villages, held by the Désmukhs and Déspandahs in virtue of their offices.

In the Dharwar collectorate, the terms Jórí Inám, Sarwa Inám, and Jágír, occur. Jórí Inám, in the English abstract of the government lists of the towns and villages, appears, as a quit-rent tenure, Sarwa Inám, Sarwa meaning *all, wholly, entirely;* implying, that the tenure is free from rent or tax, and is very properly distinguished from the Jórí Inám, which is not the case in the other collectorates.

CHAP. VII.

THE Désmukh's office is certainly of considerable antiquity. Tradition states that the office was originally held only by Mahrattas; and

in nine instances out of ten it still continues to be held by them. The importance of the office is attested by the fact, that in the earliest mention of the chiefs of the present great Mahratta families, they are styled Désmukhs of such and such districts. Their rights were hereditary, and saleable, wholly, or in part. The concurring testimony of the people proves the hereditary right; and the proof of the power to sell is found in Bráhmans and other castes, and some few Musalmáns being now sharers in the dignities, rights, and emoluments of Désmukh. At Ahmednagar, one-third of the Désmukhí belongs to a Bráhman, and two-thirds belong to the Nagpoor chief's family.

In many cases the Désmukh unites with his office that of Patél, or headman, of some village in his district. At Ahmednagar, the Bráhman, who is one-third Désmukh, is also Patél and Kulkarní,—an almost unprecedented plurality.

The rights and emoluments of Désmukh are very extensive; but they are not uniform throughout the country. In the first place, they have a per centage on the net revenue, collected in different ways, and varying from one to five per cent. In the Poona collectorate, the mean charge for Désmukhs and Déspandahs, is 3·06 per cent on the gross revenue, but on the net revenue it amounts as nearly as possible to 6 per cent; at Tacklí, Taraf Khatgáon, in the village papers, it appeared to be 1 rupee, and 14½ annas per cent; at Parnair, Parganah Parnair, 1 rupee, and 13½ annas per cent; at Wangí Parganah Wangí, the Désmukh and Déspandah, by the village papers, appeared to be entitled to share 8 rupees, and 3¼ annas per cent on the net collections,—a very large and unusual per centage.

These details are illustrative of their varying claims on the revenue. The next advantage consists in some of them enjoying villages in free-gift. The third is in possessing Inám land in many villages of their districts. In some instances the quantity is of great magnitude. At Moholtálluk Mohol, the two sharers in the office of Désmukh have each 600 bíghás (450 acres) of free land. At Parnair, Parganah Parnair, the three sharers in the office, and the Kulkarní, and one or two Gósawís, have 1004½ bíghás of free land. The fourth right of the Désmukh is that of a portion of grain called Gúgrí, from all the land under cultivation in their districts. It varies in different villages, but the aggregate amount is very considerable.

In addition to the grain-rights they have other claims on villages. At Wamúrí, Taraf Rahúrí, I found the Désmukh entitled to a sheep, and to a rupee's worth of ghí, annually; in lieu of which, two rupees

appeared in the village expenses as paid to him. Where sugar-cane is grown, they get a portion of the Gúl. At Angur, Parganah Mohol, Poonah collectorate, a charge of twenty-six rupees appears in the village papers, for a present of a dress to the Désmukh: they have also complicated rights on the customs.

The Désmukhs were, no doubt, originally appointed by government, and they possessed all the above advantages, on the tenure of collecting and being responsible for the revenue, for superintending the cultivation and police of their districts, and carrying into effect all orders of government. They were, in fact, to a district what a Patél is to a village; in short, were charged with its whole government.

That their duties are in abeyance is no fault of their own. Under the Musalmán, and subsequently under the Bráhman government, and at present under our own government, their functions have been suspended; but under Musalmáns, Bráhmans, and Christians, they have had the rare fortune to preserve the advantages and emoluments of their office untouched.

CHAP. VIII.

The Déspandahs are contemporary in their institution with the Désmukhs; they are the writers and accountants of the latter, and are always Bráhmans. They are to districts what Kulkarnís are to villages. Like the Désmukhs they have a per-centage on the revenue, Inám village, and Inám lands, Gúgrí, or grain-rights, and trifling miscellaneous rights of Ghí, Gúl, &c. But these rights are in a diminished ratio of from 25 to 50 per cent below those of the Désmukhs.

At Mohol, I found the Déspandah Apají Baolí possessing rights in fifty-seven Company's villages, and in six Inám villages, comprising a per-centage on their revenue, Inám lands, and Gúgrí, in most of them. He had a list arranged in a tabular form, called Patrak Jamín Jarha Mozehwur, or details of the land, Ináms, garden and field-cultivation, assessments, &c. &c. in each village in his district, which afforded by inspection every requisite information. The Gúgrí rights of the Déspandah, on the lands of the town of Mohol, were forty-eight sérs of grain for every thirty bíghás under cultivation.

The duties to government of the Déspandahs, were to keep detailed accounts of the revenue of their district, and to furnish government with copies; they were also writers, accountants, and registrars, within their own limits. I have stated that the functions of the Désmukhs and Déspandahs are in abeyance, and government is consequently put

to the expense of other officers to execute the duties for which they continue to be so richly paid. If they be objected to on the score of their want of probity, the numerous dismissals of our Muámalahdárs, native collectors, in the different collectorates, indicate a parity of moral turpitude. But in the case of the hereditary officers, the government would possess a very important check upon their dishonesty in the ability to abrogate their hereditary rights, which would involve themselves and families in ruin. In the case of our Muámalahdárs, who are mostly foreigners and adventurers, or dissatisfied adherents of the late Bráhman government, independently of their natural cupidity, the necessity of providing for their families prompts them to peculate, and risk a discovery, which costs them rarely more than dismissal. If the old officers be objected to, for want of knowledge or ability, the reply is, Who are so likely to be intimately acquainted with all village revenue details as those who have rights, the annual value of which is in the ratio of the extent of village cultivation, which a personal superintendence only can ascertain? If they be objected to on account of their influence being exerted unfavourably for their masters—setting aside the inutility of such conduct under a vigorous government, and its impolicy from the valuable rights they have at stake—the probabilities of attachment are at least more in favour of the chief officers, the Désmukhs, who are Mahrattas, than of *temporary* Bráhman servants, who hate the British from caste, independently of a lurking hostility in all Bráhmans' breasts from our having subverted their temporal power. The Déspandah, however much he might be affected by the feelings of his sect, would necessarily be awed by a proper sense of the great and permanent value of his hereditary rights, the loss of which he would not lightly risk.

CHAP. IX.

THE next important tenure is that of the Patéis, usually called Potail, or head-men of towns and villages. This office, together with the village accountant's, is, no doubt, coeval with those of the Désmukh and Déspandah.

The term is Mahratta. I have not met with a trace of the appellation Gáora, alluded to by Captain Grant Duff, which is stated to me to be a Kanrí, or Carnatic, word; and heads of villages are still called Gáor, within the boundaries of the Kanrí language. The Sanskrit term *Grámadikarí*, I am told by Bráhmans, would be descriptive of the lord or master of the village, equivalent to the present

term Sarva Inámdár, rather than that of Patél—*Grám*, in Sanskrit, meaning village; *Adíkar*, the bearing of royal insignia, being pre-eminent.

Originally the Patéls were Mahrattas only; but sale, gift, or other causes, have extended the right to many other castes. A very great majority of Patéls, however, are still Mahrattas; their offices were hereditary and saleable, and many documentary proofs are still extant of such sales. I made a translation of one of these documents, dated 104 years ago; it was executed in the face of the country and with the knowledge of the government. This paper fully illustrates all the rights, dignities, and emoluments, of the office of Patél.[1]

CHAP. X.

THE next village tenure is that of Kulkarní; the office is of very great importance, for the Kulkarní is not only the accountant of the government revenue, but he keeps the private accounts of each individual in the village, and is the general amanuensis—few of the cultivators, the Patéls frequently inclusive, being able to write or cypher for themselves. In no instance have I found this office held by any other caste than the Bráhmanical. I have previously mentioned that it is sometimes united to that of Déspandah, and also to that of the village Joshí, or astrologer, as at Taklí, Taraf Khatgáon, and Ahmednagar collectorate, where the Kulkarní has five and a half bíghás of Inám land, as astrologer. Like the Patél he has Inám land, salary, fees of grain, and miscellaneous claims of Ghí, Gúl, &c. Sometimes, but rarely, he has equal rights in land, salary, and Gúgrí, with the Patél; but generally they vary from twenty-five to seventy-five per cent below those of the Patél. At Angar, Parganah Mohol, the Kulkarní and Natíl have each a salary of 100 rupees, and forty-eight sérs of grain on every thirty bíghás of land under cultivation. The Kulkarní has not Inám lands, which the Patél has.

These instances are sufficient to illustrate the Kulkarní's rights, their number, want of uniformity, and varying value. The duties he has to perform have been already adverted to.

I know of few instances of the office being held by different families unconnected by the ties of blood; unlike the Désmukhs

[1] As Colonel SYKES proposes to submit the document above alluded to to the Society, it has not been deemed necessary, on the present occasion, to go into the detail of the rights and duties of the Patél.

and Patéls, the Bráhman Kulkarnís have had the ingenuity, or good fortune, almost to prevent aliens from participating in their rights.

Male children succeed to the rights of their parents in equal proportions, unhappily to the great detriment of the public service and injury of the cultivators. Unlike the practice of the Désmukhs and Patéls, the executive duties are taken in succession by all the members of a family entitled to share in the rights and emoluments of the office. The consequence is, that, in a great majority of the offices, the duties fall to a new person annually, who is necessarily ignorant of the details of the preceding year, and, in some cases, it does not return to the same individual until after a lapse of twenty years. At Jamgáon, belonging to Sindiah, the family of the Kulkarní consists of six branches, and there are now twenty persons to take the duties successively. The reason of its not occurring to all individuals connected by ties of blood, after equal intervals of time, was stated to result from each family taking the office in succession for one year only. For instance, with four families to share, the first having one individual capable of executing the duties, the second two, the third three, and the fourth four;—to the individual of the first family the office would recur on the fifth year; but to the first individual of the second family it would only come again on the tenth year; to the first individual of the third family, on the fifteenth year; and to the first individual of the fourth family, on the twentieth year, &c. &c. In the southern districts I found the same system obtaining, and in prosecuting my inquiries through the country, in calling for village papers for examination, so many subterfuges and evasions were based on it, that I was repeatedly defeated in my attempts to get accounts of any particular year.

If the right to share equally in property cannot be interfered with, at least for the benefit of the public, and the interests of the cultivators, the executive duties should be confined to an individual, if not for life, certainly for a definite period not less than five years.

CHAP. XI.

A VERY important tenure in villages is that of the low-caste people, called Mahr by the Mahrattas, and Dhérs by the Musalmáns. They have Inám lands in all villages, divided into Harkí and Arólah; the former is rent-free, and generally bears but a small proportion to the latter: the Arólah is held on a quit-rent. In the neighbourhood of

Júnar and at Kothul, Parganah Kothul, Ahmednagar collectorate, I met with a new species of Mahrs Inám, called Sísolah; this is also rent-free, and held in addition to the two former. These Ináms vary in extent in different villages. In only one instance, in the large town of Jembourní, did it come to my knowledge that the Mahrs had not Inám lands, and in that place they had to perform all the customary duties for the government and the town, as if they had Inám lands. The Mahrs conceive that they have the right to mortgage or dispose of the lands held for the performance of specific duties, and I found the whole of the Mahrs Arólah at the town of Mahr, Tar Mahrkohreh, Poonah collectorate, mortgaged to the Patél. They were originally mortgaged to the Désmukh for a sum of money, who transferred them to the Patél. Independently of their Harkí, Arólah, and Sísolah, the Mahrs have a share of the cultivator's produce, whether garden or field; this is called their Ballúteh. Every village, in its original constitution, is said to have had twelve craftsmen and professions, who, in their several lines, had to perform all that the cultivators required to be done for themselves individually, and the village collectively. The smith and carpenter to mend their implements of husbandry, the barber to shave them, the washerman to wash their clothes, the pot-maker to make pots, &c. &c. These twelve persons were paid or supported by an assessment in kind. They were divided into three classes, and obtained their share of Ballotí agreeably to the class they stood in. In the first class were the carpenter, shoemaker, iron-smith, and Mahr; in the second class, the washerman, pot-maker, barber, and Mang; and in the third, the waterman, the astrologer, the Gúrú, or cleaner of the temple, and the silversmith. Since the Musalmán rule, the Mauláná, or Musalmán priest, has been added; and, in some villages, the Kulkarní claims to share in the third class. I say nothing about Alúteh, as part of the village community; for no two persons agree with respect to the constituents of this class, and it is scarcely reasonable to suppose, that the cultivator could ever have supported by fees in kind twelve additional persons, in case he paid thirty or fifty per cent to government; and I am told the Ballotí and Hakkdár rights stood him, on an average, twenty-five per cent, leaving him only twenty-five per cent for his own maintenance and agricultural charges.

The Mahr, who shares in the first class, in consequence of his numerous duties, shares also again as a third class Ballotídár. The fee in kind appears to be a per-centage on the produce, but it is not uniform throughout the country; and very rarely indeed could I get either cultivator or Ballotídár to state specifically what the one gave,

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or the other looked upon himself entitled to receive, annually. It depended very much, I was told, upon the crops, and also upon the extent of services performed for each individual cultivator.

At the village of Sírúr, Ahmednagar collectorate, the first class Torlí Khass Ballotídár is entitled to 300 Gúrah, or bundles of the heads of Joárí and Bajrí, for every chahur, or 120 bíghás of land under cultivation. The Gúrah is of a definite size, about a foot in diameter, and of course there is a greater or less number of heads of grain in the Gúrah agreeably to the size of the heads.

The second class, or Madlí Khass, get 225 Gúrah; the third class, or Dhaktí Khass, 175 Gúrah each, upon 120 bíghás of cultivation. Of all other grains, excepting the above, the Ballotídár gets a similar number of Passah, or as much as is contained in the hollow of one hand, with the fingers bent up as to hold water. In practice, however, to save the trouble of this minute measurement, a basketful, supposed to contain the necessary quantity, is given.

The Ballotí fees, therefore, at Mehlungeh, cost the farmer thirty-six per cent of his cheap grains. At Ankulnér, Ahmednagar collectorate, the cultivators assured me they put by twenty-five per cent of their produce for the whole of the Ballotí. With respect to sugar-cane, the classes get respectively for every Kareh, or large copperful of juice, five, two and a half, and one and a quarter, sugar-canes. Proportions of onions, garlic, carrots, radishes, and garden-stuff generally, were given by the Wapha, or small square plots, into which garden lands are divided to facilitate irrigation. They get shares of a Wapha in the ratio of five, two, and one.

For the extensive advantages the Mahrs enjoy, they have numerous duties to perform to the state and to the village. I have been the more careful in my inquiries respecting them, particularly in alienated villages, where old customs may be supposed to remain unaffected by the change of government, in consequence of our government having waved its claims to the services of the Mahrs generally, on the ground of this class of persons in some few villages continuing to pay a trifling tax, called Rabtah Mahr, in lieu of performing personal services; but this tax was in lieu of services dependant on local circumstances, and not in lieu of customary duties. At Wangí, Parganah Mandrúp, sub-collectorate of Sholapúr, the Mahrs pay a Rabtah of twenty-four rupees, the origin of which is as follows:—Formerly, when NÍMBALKAR, of Karmalleh, who held Wangí, and an extensive tract along the Sína river, in Jahgír, from the Nizám, had one of his *pagas* of horse stationed near Wangí, the Mahrs worked gratuitously for six months in the year, in the stables; on the removal of the paga,

NÍMBALKAR levied a tax on the Mahrs, in place of six months' stable work, but did not remit any of their ordinary duties. In the twelve villages of the Mahr, Kohreh Poonah collectorate, the Rabtah is levied; but it is in lieu of the former specific duties of gratuitously supplying all government officers who came into the district, and partly, also, the hill forts, with dry wood and grass; all other duties were unaffected by the tax." In explanation of this tax I was informed, that under the late government, when the Muámalahdár came into a district, all the Mahrs in turn were to give personal service in stabling his horses and those of his attendants, and in supplying wood and grass gratis, in carrying loads, and going with messages, &c. &c.; and this duty continued for the time the Muámalahdár remained in the district. The calls for their services becoming unfrequent, in consequence, probably, of the introduction of the revenue-farming system, the district farmers levied the Rabtah; but other duties, excepting the supply of wood and grass, and stabling the horses, were unaffected by it. At the town of Kheir, Tálluk Kortí Ahmednagar collectorate, the Mahrs have 180 bíghás of Inám land; the Rabtah is only ten rupees. On desiring an enumeration of the duties of the Mahrs, I was told they had to supply wood and grass to government officers and travellers, to act as guides, as porters to carry baggage, to go as messengers, and to perform all the customary village duties.

"At the town of Kanúr, Taraf Kanúr, held in Jágír, I found the Mahrs' present duties were to cut grass and wood, to perform the duties of grooms for the Jágírdár and government officers, to carry loads, letters, packets, and messages, to act as guides, and to attend strangers. At the town of Kothul, Parganah Kothul, Ahmednagar collectorate, the half of which belongs to the British, the Kulkarní, in one sweeping expression, said, the Mahrs had to perform all duties required by the government, or the Pandrí, without exception: they had at this place the two Ináms, Sísolah and Harkí, and the quit-rent Inám Arólah. So essentially is the duty of cutting wood and grass associated with the office of the Mahrs, that their signature, in all public documents of the village, is a sickle, or hatchet, and a rope, the former to cut grass and wood, and the latter to bind it up. Finally, a few words are necessary with respect to some strictly village duties of the Mahrs; they are the referees in all boundary disputes; they are the guardians of land-marks, and know the limits of each field; they get the cultivators together in collecting the revenue, and it is their duty to carry the money collected to the district collector; and they assist the Patél in his police duties. In no instance, in the course of my inquiries, did I find them performing watch and ward for the

village, or made responsible for losses by robbery. In cases of an individual of consideration putting up in their village, or encamping outside the walls, if he desired protection at night, and there were no Ramosís, or Bhíls, in the village, whose specific duty is watch and ward, then the Mahrs performed the duty.

It is to be understood, that in the whole of the duties of the Mahrs, whether for government or the village, they are not bound to go beyond the village neighbouring to their own; here they hand over their charge to the village Mahrs, and return.

From the above details, it will be seen what are the respective claims of the government and the village on the Mahrs. Where the Rabtah tax prevails, it modifies, but does not abrogate, the government claims; and where it does not exist, as the Kulkarní of Kothul declared, there the government and village claims for service are to the extent of the Mahrs' physical means.

This class of the community, although so debased in its moral and religious relations, is unquestionably in more easy circumstances than any other part of the people. Government having relaxed its hold upon the Mahrs, without diminishing their means, in many towns and villages they are become indolent, impudent, and litigious; and, in many instances, it came to my knowledge that they were at issue with their villages, striking work, and leaving all their burdensome duties to be performed by the cultivators. Their efficiency in diffusing information over the country is very remarkable; and we have repeated instances of news, letters, signs, or tokens, involving the communication of certain matters, having been sent from Hindústán, and diffused over the Dekkan, by means of this class, with an astonishing rapidity. Even at the present day, distant political events are known to the native community as soon, and sometimes sooner, than to our own government; and it is by means of the Mahrs. Their method is very simple: A message, a letter, or some simple and easily multiplied token, is put into the hands of three or four village Mahrs; each runs to a neighbouring village, and delivers his message; copies are instantly taken of the letter, or the tokens are suitably multiplied, and three or four men run with them to three or four neighbouring villages. In this way they spread in geometrical progression, or as circles expand on the surface of water when a stone is thrown in. Forwarding information is a village duty; and the collectors might well avail themselves of it to communicate with their district officers, to the saving of the expense of the Síbandís, or irregular troops, who are now kept up for that purpose, and to the improvement of the speed with which information and orders are now sent.

CHAP. XII.

LANDS were given to Sepoys in the districts, in lieu of salary, for the performance of specific duties, principally in the protection of their villages.

The tenure is called Shétsanadí, from Shét, a field, and Sanad, a grant. The Shétsanadís are, in fact, a landed militia. This tenure is still found in five Parganahs of the Poonah collectorate, namely, Havailí, Sholapúr, Mohol, Indí, and Mudébíhall; the lands held being to the value of 34,435 rup. 2 qrs. 43 reas, including a right upon the Sayher, or shop, and professional tax to the amount of 381 rupees. In looking over the papers of Karmáleh, Ahmednagar collectorate, I found a deduction of 1126 rs. for the value of lands alienated at Shétsanadí. This alienation is probably not confined to Karmáleh; but I did not remark the cost of it in looking over the Jamabandí settlement of the collectorate for 1827–28.

There are several other tenures, of which a rapid notice may be given. The Chaugula is the Patél's assistant. He is found in most villages; sometimes he has a trifling land-grant, but commonly a fee in grain from the cultivators. At Kúral and Wangí, bordering on the Kanrí, or Carnatic tracts, I found the Chaugula denominated Baglah. Usually he is a Mahratta; but here he proved to be a Lingáit Wání, who is a seller of groceries by profession, and, in religious tenets, is exclusively a worshipper of the Ling, of Mahádéva.

In some Tarafs a Haváldár is still found. The term is rather descriptive of a military person than a civil functionary.

The Haváldár was probably introduced by the Musalmáns, to assist the Patél by his influence, as a person on the part of the government, in the collection of the revenue. The Haváldár's support was usually a grain-payment, levied on the cultivators. At Tacklí, near Ahmednagar, I found the Haváldár (a Musalmán) entitled to half a sér of Joarí on each bíghá under cultivation. In 1827 this amounted to about 1200 sérs. The half of it went to the Haváldár, who took it in kind; the other half went to government, who commuted it into a money-payment, at forty sérs per rupee. At Nandoor, Parganah Baragáon Nandoor, the Haváldár's family is extinct; but the rights are levied from the village, and government obtains twenty-four rupees per annum in lieu of them.

Mr. CHAPLIN, in his Report on the Dekkan, mentions a Haváldár as an officer of a Taraf, under the last government, whose duty it was to make the collections of the Mahalls, or Tarafs, and to remit them to

the Muámalahdárs, and to inquire into petty complaints. In some small districts, called Tarafs, in lieu of the Haváldárí cess, there appears a cess denominated Náikwarí. It is probably the Hindú appellation equivalent to the Musalmán term Haváldárí. The Náik was a petty officer in the Tarafs, and assisted in making the collections; he now assists the Shaikdár, or inspector of cultivation, in his duties.

In the small district of Mahr, Kohreh Poonah collectorate, containing one town and eleven villages, the tax in kind levied upon the cultivators, called Náikwarí, amounted to forty-eight sérs per village, excepting the town of Mahr, which is not cessed. In this Taraf, the Náikwarí is in the possession of a Mahratta family of the name of Síndeh. At the town of Kanur, Taraf Kanur, Ahmednagar collectorate, the Náikwarí's fee is twelve sérs of grain on every thirty bíghás of land under cultivation. The duty of the office there made the person holding it a kind of *homme d'affaires* for the Jágídár and the town authorities. Captain GRANT DUFF describes the term to be applicable to a kind of hereditary land-measurer on the village establishment. I have not met with him in this character.

The Ballotí tenure has already been spoken of. Frequently small portions of rent-free land are held by the individuals composing the village office-bearers; but their chief support is their Ballúteh, or grain-right, on the cultivators. The tenure on which their rights are held, is to perform specific duties, each in his line or business, for the village and villagers, and occasionally, also, for the state.

In the southern villages, bordering on the Carnatic, I met with the village officer called Talwár; he is unknown to the genuine Mahrattas. His duties appear to assimilate him with the Haváldár of the districts further north. At the villages of Kúral and Wangí, on the Sína river, I found the Talwárs to be Kohlís in caste, and not Mahrattas. Repeated mention is made of the Talwár in Dr. MARSHALL'S Report on the Neighbourhood of Dharwár.

The Ramosís (thieves by birth) are found in most villages in the Dekkan, between the parallels of lat. 17° and 19° north, and long. 73° 40′ and 75° east. They have occasionally lands in Inám given to them, to be responsible for the safety of property in the towns and villages where the lands are granted. I observed this to be the case at the town of Kheir, on the Bíma river, Taraf Rasín, where the Ramosís have sixty bíghás of land. In the same town the Mahrs have one hundred and eighty bíghás. These distinct grants, therefore, prove that watch and ward is a separate duty from that of the Mahrs. Most of the villages in the Desh, or open country, think it

necessary to have one or more of these villains in employ, to secure the village from robbery; there being an understanding amongst the fraternity which assures the village of protection. They are usually paid in contributions in grain from the inhabitants. Is is the duty of the Ramosí to perform watch and ward; and in all my marches in the Dés, the Ramosís were deputed by the villagers to watch my tents at night, the inhabitants of a village being considered responsible for the safety of the property of a stranger who puts up with them.

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At the town of Baragáon Nandúr, Parganah Baragáon Nandúr, on the Múl river, which is without the location of the Ramosís, I found four families of Bhíls in possession of thirty bíghás of land, held on the tenure to be responsible for all property stolen from the village. This was the first instance of the kind I had met with. The Mahrs in the same village had an Inám (Arólah) of one hundred and twenty bíghás.

In the hilly tracts the Kohlís are employed in a similar manner to the Bhíls.

Cheteh is the person by common consent admitted to be the head and spokesman of the shopkeepers and market people, where they are in sufficient numbers to require one; and as combination, in its fullest sense, every where exists amongst shopkeepers in the regulation of prices, he is of some importance amongst them as their organ. Mahájún means properly a merchant: he is an inferior person to the Shaikh, and occupies his place as occasions demand. Both these people in some towns and villages have trifling Inám lands and claims for money and grain, but on what tenure of service to the community is not very apparent.

I should scarcely have introduced mention of the Sar Patél and Sar Désaí, as it has not come to my notice that they hold lands in tenure; but mention is made of them as Hakkdárs, in village expenses. The Sar Patél's rights of money, grain, and Ghí, are very extensive at the two villages of Borowlí and Kewleh, in the Poonah collectorate; for in a revenue of 331 rups. 1 qr. 3¾ annas, in the former village, the Sar Patél was entitled to a money-payment of 3 rups. 2 qrs. 3 as. and one sér of Ghí, in lieu of which he was paid half a rupee. At Kewleh, in a revenue of 948 rups. 0 qr. 2 annas, the Sar Patél received 9 rup. 3 qr. 3½ as. in money, and one sér of Ghí, or half a rupee

instead. The Sar Patél's rights, within my northern limits, I understand to be vested in the family of ESWANT RAO DABARCH, of Tellegáon, whose son was married to a daughter of DAULAT RAO SÍNDIAH. In each of the above two villages, the Sar Désaí (vested in the family called Chaskar, from holding hereditary offices in the town of Chas, on the Bíma river), was entitled to one rupee in money, and one sér of Ghí, commuted to half a rupee. I am ignorant of the duties these great personages have to perform. The Désaí is probably indentical with the Désmukh, as in the southern Mahratta country he is found in the situation of the Désmukh, the latter term not being used. The Désaí was rarely met with by me.

Captain GRANT DUFF makes mention of several Sar Désmukhs, and that AURANGZÉB allowed the old Sar Désmukhs two per cent on the revenue. They were probably the connecting links between the Désmukhs and the prince. The Sar Désmukhí of modern times, which appears in all village accounts, was ten per cent on the Mogul revenue exacted by SEWÁJÍ from the Musalmáns. It was levied over and above the Musalmán revenues: the sufferers, therefore, by Mahratta violence were the Mahratta cultivators; and on the whole of the possessions of the Musalmáns coming into the hands of the Mahratta government, the Sar Désmukhí should have been abandoned. But it remains to this day as part of the revenue; for instance, at the town of Jehúr, near Ahmednagar, whose Tankha is 10,817 rups. 3 qr. 2 as.; the Sar Désmukhí is 1350 rups. 3 qr. 3 as.; and Kamál, or total, 19,363 rups. 1 qr. 3 as. At Khair Tálluk Kortí, the A'ín Tankhuáh is 8852 rups. 0 qrs. $3\frac{1}{2}$ as.; the Sar Desmukhí is 1106 rups. 2 qrs. $2\frac{1}{2}$ annas.

Individuals have shares in the village revenues, distinguished by the names of Mokassa, Sahotra, Babtí, and Nargoura. The most intelligible way to describe these, is to say that persons have money-assignments, amounting to a definite per-centage on the revenue under these names. In their origin, Mokassa is sixty-six per cent, Sahotra, six per cent, Babtí, twenty-five per cent, and Nagoura, three per cent, of the Chouth, or fourth of the revenue, extorted by the Mahrattas from the Moguls. SEWÁJÍ and his chiefs shared it amongst themselves: the chiefs had the Mokassa for military services; the Sahotra was given to the Pant Sucheu, one of the ministers; the prince's share was the Babtí; and the Nagoura, which is synonymous with Sar Patél, or chief of all the Patéls, was at the disposal of the Rájá. The equal division of property and rights amongst children has occasioned the reduction of some of the shares to the most trifling amount, where families have multiplied.

With reference to the tenures above detailed, excepting only Sarva Inám, or lands entirely free, and hereditary lands, there was an obligation of specific service on the individual or body of men enjoying advantages under the several tenures. The non-performance of these duties involved the forfeiture of their rights; but, independently of such forfeiture, all grants whatever were, no doubt, resumable at the pleasure of the prince. Grants for religious purposes were rarely recalled, but for other objects they were frequently abrogated; particularly, Jágír, Saranjám, and Hakkdár's grants. To such an extent did this exist under the last government, that Mr. ELPHINSTONE, in his Report, enumerates, as an item of revenue, Watan Zabtí, or sequestered lands of Zamíndárs, which yielded annually fifty thousand rupees. The resumption of Jágírs by the Péshwá is well known. Finally, I have no hesitation in expressing my opinion, that in many instances Désmukhs, Déspandahs, Patéls, and Kulkarnís, have furtively taken advantage of the confusion consequent on the government passing into new hands, to enlarge their Inám lands, ready-money claims, and grain-fees; and a register of their present rights, embracing the minutest details, appears necessary to put limits to further encroachments.

The whole number of *populated* towns and villages in 1828, in the four collectorates of the Dekkan, amounted to 9535. Of this number 1695½ appear to be alienated, or 7·74 per cent (not quite a sixth), leaving 7839½ on the several collectors' returns. To this number are to be added the *depopulated* villages, whose lands are under cultivation, as they are not included in the lists.

W. H. SYKES,

Statistical Reporter to the Government of Bombay.

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